

REMARKS

This paper responds to the Office Action mailed on March 8, 2006.

Claim 1 is amended, no claims are canceled, and no claims are added; as a result, claims 1-7 are now pending in this application.

In the Specification

The specification is amended to update the status of the patent application to include the priority data of the instant application. No new matter is introduced.

§103 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 1-2 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cairncross et al. (U.S. 5,447,757) in view of Hefele (U.S. 5,460,316). Applicant respectfully traverses.

Applicant respectfully submits that the Office Action has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness because Cairncross in view of Hefele does not teach each and every element of the rejected claims. Claim 1 recites " a first coating applied to one surface of the stencil pattern and one or more side surfaces of the stenciling openings and having a surface tension greater than the surface tension of the stencil pattern; and a second coating applied to the opposite surface of the stencil pattern and having a surface tension less than the surface tension of the stencil pattern." In contrast, neither of the references cited in the Office Action discloses a first coating on one surface and the sides of a stencil pattern having a greater surface tension than a second coating on the opposite surface of a stencil pattern.

Applicant respectfully points out that the Office Action has not stated any specific textual basis for the stated interpretation of Cairncross. In contrast to the subject matter recited in claim 1, Cairncross discloses a process for making a polymeric ledge on one side of a metal stencil screen. The Office Action states that Cairncross teaches a stencil comprising a coating applied to the opposite surface of the stencil pattern and having a surface tension less than the surface tension of the stencil pattern (a polymeric material). Applicant cannot find in Cairncross any disclosure of a coating applied to the opposite surface of the stencil pattern. Cairncross discloses "a polymeric ledge." (see column 2, line 22). Cairncross does not disclose a coating.

Furthermore, Cairncross does not disclose a coating having a surface tension less than the surface tension of the stencil pattern. Applicant cannot find in Cairncross any disclosure of differing surface tensions, or any discussion of surface tensions whatsoever.

Applicant respectfully points out that the Office Action has not stated any specific textual basis for the stated interpretation of Hefele. In contrast to the subject matter recited in claim 1, Hefele discloses the application of a diamond coating on the bottom, sides and top of a stencil pattern to increase wear resistance.

Applicant cannot find in Hefele any disclosure of a coating having a surface tension less than the surface tension of the stencil pattern. Applicant cannot find in Hefele any disclosure of differing surface tensions, or any discussion of surface tensions whatsoever. In support of the assertion that Hefele teaches differing surface tensions, the Office Action states "It is the examiner's position that diamond has a greater surface tension than stainless steel because diamond is a hard, wear-resistant material similar to those materials with those materials having greater surface tensions taught by applicant's specification (at paragraph 0035-0036). First, Applicant points out that Applicant's specification is not organized by paragraph, Applicant's specification is organized by column number and line number. The 35th and 36th paragraphs of Applicant's specification are not related to the surface tension of materials. Second, applicant cannot locate any disclosure in Applicant's specification that a diamond coating has a greater surface tension than any other material. Furthermore, Hefele discloses that the diamond coating may be applied to the bottom, sides, and top of the stencil pattern: "Referring now to FIG. 3, protective diamond coating 22 covers top surface 18 of stencil body 12 and also side wall surfaces 16 of each aperture 14 of stencil 10. Preferably, as shown in FIG. 3, the coating is applied also to undersurface 20 of stencil body 12 to ensure even contact with underlying circuit board 30 during printing operations. Therefore, Hefele does not disclose differing surface tensions.

Thus, Applicant respectfully asserts that the Office Action has not established a prima facie case of obviousness, because neither Cairncross nor Hefele include any disclosure of stencil pattern coatings of differing surface tensions. As a result, Applicant respectfully requests removal of the rejection of Claim 1. Claims 2 and 4 are dependant claims based on claim 1, and

incorporate all limitations recited in claim 1. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests removal of the rejection of claims 2 and 4.

Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cairncross et al. in view of Hefele and Mehregany (U.S. 5,579,583). Applicant respectfully traverses.

Claim 3 is a dependant claim based on claim 1, and incorporates all limitations recited in claim 1. Claim 1 is believed allowable. Thus, Applicant respectfully requests removal of the rejection of claims 2 and 4.

§112 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for indefiniteness. Applicant respectfully traverses. Per the Office Action's suggestion, claim 1 presently recites "a first coating applied to one surface of the stencil pattern and one or more side surfaces of the stenciling openings and having a surface tension greater than the surface tension of the stencil pattern." Thus, Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-4.

Claim Objections

Claims 1 was objected to as being confusing due to a typographical error. Claim 1 has been amended. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance, and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney at (612) 349-9587 to facilitate prosecution of this application.

If necessary, please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date 26 June '06

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CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail, in an envelope addressed to: MS Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 26 day of June, 2006.

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